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District Female Literacy Expansion Project

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Final Report

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Introduction

In 1994, World Education, with financial assistance from USAID (Grant number 367-0168-G-00-4197-00), began coordinating the District Female Literacy Expansion Project (DFLEP), a three year project ending in August 1997, in collaboration with the National Council for Non-Formal Education (NFEC). World Education and the Council worked to build the capacity of District Education Offices to coordinate, expand, and improve the delivery of literacy education services by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governmental organizations (GOs) and other local groups. Because of World Education and the NFEC's efforts, the number of literate women in Nepal increased substantially during this time.

District Female Literacy Expansion Project Model

The District Female Literacy Expansion Project bridged the resources of the Ministry of Education, World Education, governmental and non-governmental organizations at the district level with the aim of strengthening and expanding the delivery of basic NFE/literacy education to women. In September 1994 project activities were first initiated in the districts of Rupandehi, Tanahu, and Sankhuwasava, and in September 1995 expanded to the districts of Nawalparasi, Makwanpur, Lamjung, and Humla. In July 1996, Bardiya and Kanchanpur were added as project districts, and World Education phased out of Rupandehi, Tanahu, and Sankhuwasava.

Under this model, World Education and each District Education Office assumed a grant-giving role and managed the distribution of block grants to NGOs and other organizations involved in implementation of NFE/literacy programs. Non-governmental, governmental organizations and other local entities were encouraged to apply to World Education and/or the District Education Office for funding. Non-governmental organizations and government line agencies with on-going development activities were encouraged to expand their existing programs or to integrate NFE/literacy education into their existing sectoral programs; at the same time, alternative groups (Village Development Committees, mothers groups, small groups facilitated by high school girls) were encouraged to initiate NFE/literacy activities. Grants were awarded to non-governmental and governmental organizations based on the selection criteria determined by a technical committee, formed in each district, under the chairmanship of the District Education Officer.

Specifically, the District Education Offices in their new capacity had the responsibility to:

- 1) Identify, select, and contract with NGOs and other local entities who provided literacy services;
- 2) Disburse and monitor grants to NGOs and other local entities;
- 3) Evaluate NGO effectiveness in training and in helping women achieve literacy skills and participate in development;
- 4) Provide technical assistance to NGOs in training; and,

- 5) Promote information sharing, coordination, and collaboration among organizations providing NFE/literacy services and between these organizations and other development agencies.

At the same time the District Education Offices in the districts were doing this, World Education was doing the same activities via the same processes, and supplying the DEOs with technical assistance throughout the implementation phase.

Project Goal and Purpose

Originally, in 1994, the goal of the project was to build the capacity of the Ministry of Education through the Non-Formal Education Council (NFEC) and the District Education Offices (DEO) in three pilot districts. World Education oversaw and improved the provision of literacy education services for women by local NGOs and other entities. The purpose of such an effort was to help the government of Nepal and NGOs reach 300,000 illiterate women and girls with literacy education services by the end of 1996. The main focus of World Education's efforts were to develop various models of collaboration between the government and the numerous NGOs who are involved in providing literacy services, and to provide models for the types of training and support needed by the NFEC and the DEO in order to coordinate activities aimed at increasing women's literacy and participation in Nepal's development.

Objectives and Impact Statement

The original grant agreement signed in 1994 included the following two objectives:

1. To improve the ability of the Non-Formal Education Council to:
 - (a) provide effective coordination of literacy activities nationwide;
 - (b) develop policies for advancing post-literacy and curriculum for special populations; and,
 - (c) assist in helping INGOs, indigenous NGOs and other public/private sector entities to utilize a network for developing collaborations, sharing information and strategies, and seeking funding to support female literacy.
2. To improve the ability of District Education Offices (in three pilot districts) to:
 - (a) identify, select and contract with NGOs and other local entities who will provide literacy services;
 - (b) disburse and monitor grants to NGOs;
 - (c) evaluate NGO effectiveness in training and in helping women achieve literacy skills and participate in development;
 - (d) provide technical assistance to NGOs in curriculum/materials development and coordination; and,
 - (e) assist literacy NGOs to develop linkages with other development agencies.

In 1995, the following impact statement was included:

- To increase the number of literate women in the project districts by June, 1997.

Project Results

World Education helped 69,581 people become neo-literate through basic literacy training over the past three years. In order to do this, World Education supported 3,599 basic literacy classes. From 1995 through 1997, World Education also provided 11,142 neo-literate people with 591 post literacy classes. The NFEC helped 55,099 people become neo-literate through the implementation of 2,904 basic literacy classes during this project. In three years, a total of 124,680 people, 89 percent of those women, completed a basic literacy class and are considered neo-literate.

The following charts specifically show the number of women who participated, passed the final evaluation and completed basic and post literacy classes implemented through the District Female Literacy Expansion Project.

World Education
1994/95 Basic Literacy Class Results

District	Number of Classes	Women Enrolled	Women Passed	Women Completed
Rupandehi	184	3,479	2,661	3,070
Sankhuwasava	167	2,178	1,919	2,123
Tanahu	304	5,176	3,948	4,466
Total	655	10,833	8,528	9,659

World Education
1995/96 Basic Literacy Class Results

District	Number of Classes	Women Enrolled	Women Passed	Women Completed
Humla	50	419	144	228
Lamjung	240	4,421	3,026	3,596
Makwanpur	284	6,810	4,966	5,191
Nawalparasi	289	8,225	5,020	5,418
Rupandehi	195	5,710	3,361	3,476
Sankhuwasava	150	3,240	2,101	2,425
Tanahu	249	5,894	3,331	4,014
Total	1,457	34,719	21,949	24,348

**World Education
1996/97 Basic Literacy Class Results**

District	Number of Classes	Women Enrolled	Women Passed	Women Completed
Bardiya	296	8,507	5,906	7,123
Kanchanpur	220	5,824	3,245	4,818
Humla	50	751	311	458
Lamjung	267	5,762	4,206	4,680
Makwanpur	316	6,864	5,155	5,498
Nawalparasi	338	9,284	7,115	8,240
Total	1,487	36,992	25,938	30,817

**World Education
1995/96 Post Literacy Class Results**

District	Number of Classes	Women Enrolled	Women Passed	Women Completed
Rupandehi	78	1,719	1,212	1,561
Sankhuwasava	138	2,672	1,931	2,200
Tanahu	31	571	464	498
Total	247	4,962	3,607	4,259

**World Education
1996/97 Post Literacy Class Results**

District	Number of Classes	Women Enrolled	Women Passed	Women Completed
Lamjung	41	749	546	624
Makwanpur	60	1,187	957	1,014
Nawalparasi	53	1,089	963	1,061
Rupandehi	70	1,459	1,131	1,277
Sankhuwasava	50	1,053	910	948
Tanahu	70	1,215	838	1,006
Total	344	6,752	5,363	5,930

Project Highlights

Over the past three years there have been many project highlights. Highlights have included the number of women made literate because of DFLEP, personnel trained in a variety of areas, documents produced during the life of the project, and implementation strategies that were developed all in order to strengthen the project.

Policy Guidelines

During the project's first year a set of policy guidelines were developed by NFEC and World Education staff. These guidelines were evaluated and revised after each program cycle. The guidelines were used at the district-level to aid District Education Office and World Education staff in sub-granting out literacy classes to local government offices and NGOs. The guidelines provided a fair way to allocate classes throughout the project districts (see attachment one).

Non-Formal Education Coordinator

This project created the position of non-formal education coordinator within the DEOs that World Education was working with over the last three years. These coordinators, all female but one, were mainly responsible for oversight of the NFE/literacy education classes supported by the Ministry of Education (National Council for Non-Formal Education) and World Education under the District Female Literacy Expansion Project. The NFE coordinator's salary was provided by World Education.

The non-formal education coordinator's responsibilities included:

- Working under the supervision of the District Education Officer;
- Acting as a liaison between the District Education Office and World Education on project related matters;
- Organizing and conducting necessary trainings, including Training of Trainers, Supervisors Trainings, and Facilitators Trainings;
- Supervising, monitoring, and evaluating project activities at the district level;
- Working according to the recommendations and decisions made by the technical committees;
- Preparing program reports and maintaining program documents;
- Assessing performance of implementing agencies and making necessary recommendations;
- Preparing and maintaining records of NFE/literacy-related activities run by all agencies in the district;
- Coordinating closely with the BPEP Project Coordinator, and/or other staff members at the District Education Office affiliated with NFE/literacy education programs;
- Assisting in project activities under the supervisor of the World Education program officer at the World Education district level contact office;
- Performing other activities as assigned by the National Council for Non-Formal Education and World Education; and,
- Observing classes in progress.

This position was full time and 30 percent field based. The people in these positions were given the opportunity to really learn the *ins and outs* of implementing a large non-formal education program within the District Education Offices.

All of the DFLEP program officers agree that it would be worthwhile for the District Education Office to employ at least one person to look after non-formal education activities on a full time basis. In Kanchanpur's District Education Office there was

actually a team of four people who looked after NFE activities on a regular basis. The District Education Officer may have an interest in NFE, but he/she doesn't always have time to give it his/her full attention. The NFE coordinator could be responsible for awareness of and coordination with all of the literacy activities going on in the district, as well as manage non-BPEP non-formal education activities within the District Education Office.

District Non-Formal Education Development Committee

In each district where the project was being implemented a District Non-Formal Education Development Committee (DNFEDC) represented GO and NGO organizations involved in non-formal education. The DNFEDC was formed six years ago under the Education Act of 2049 by the MOE. This committee includes 15 members of the community. The DNFEDC Chairperson is the District Development Committee (DDC) Chairperson, and the Member Secretary is the District Education Officer. Members are the DDC Vice Chairperson, the Chief District Officer, three NGO representatives, the Local Development Officer, the Agriculture Development Bank Chief, the Women's Development Office Chief, the District Public Health Office Chief, one social worker involved in education that is nominated by the DDC, the NFE Coordinator, and two headmasters nominated by the District Education Office. This committee is still active

in all districts of Nepal.

The committee has many responsibilities regarding non-formal education programs run in the districts. These include:

- Develop a plan for the implementation of literacy and post literacy programs;
- Develop an annual action plan at the district level in order to mobilize the resources of the MOE, NGOs and other organizations implementing NFE programs;
- Manage the physical and economical resources to run a literacy program in the district;
- Identify the working procedure of the defined literacy program following policies developed and presented to the NFEC;
- Implement the policies and guidelines of the NFEC at the district level;
- Encourage better working relationships and coordination between GOs and NGOs in regards to the district's NFE program;
- Select municipality/VDCs within the district and conduct surveys that identify the illiterate population;
- Send reports regarding household survey records to the NFEC;
- Conduct village orientation programs in order to introduce the local literacy

- Provide technical and economical assistance to capable NGOs for the irradiation of literacy in certain VDCs/municipalities;
- Form sub-committees to coordinate with NGOs;
- Do other NFE related activities.

The Education Act also states that the DNFEDC may form technical committees under the chairpersonship of the District Education Officer. This committee includes five members and during the DFLEP project the NFE coordinator, BPEP coordinator (if there was one in the district), an NGO representative, a representative from the DDC, and World Education's Program Officer were on the committee. The technical committee works for the DNFEDC, and implements its decisions, as well as provides technical assistance to DNFEDC committee members.

During DFLEP, the NFEC gave the DNFEDC power to make program implementation policies and plans for the program. In some cases that meant handing over responsibility to the technical committee, however, in some districts the DNFEDC's involvement was very proactive. The DNFEDC was involved in distributing literacy classes to GOs and NGOs. A few District Non-Formal Education Development Committees organized regular meetings to talk about their district's NFE program. In three districts, Rupandehi, Sankhuwasava and Tanahu, the District Development Committee and municipalities contributed money to the district's literacy fund that was managed by the DNFEDC. Over the three year project, the DNFEDC began to trust and respect the NGOs' work in non-formal education. In three years over 200 NGOs were invited to implement literacy classes in the nine project districts.

Trained Personnel

Another accomplishment over three years was the number of people trained to implement literacy programs in their communities. The training came at many levels, from master trainers and accountants from DEOs and NGOs to class facilitators and supervisors in the villages of the districts. Throughout the central-level and all nine project districts, approximately 500 people were trained as master trainers over the three year project cycle. At the local-level well over 5,000 people were trained to facilitate, supervise or monitor literacy classes. There are plenty of personnel able to organize and implement literacy programs within their districts.

There were a few trainings that concentrated on capacity building for NGOs during the final year of the project including a leadership and management training for 29 DFLEP NGO representatives from 26 NGOs. This training was held in July 1997 and put an emphasis on project design and proposal writing. The overall objective of the training was to strengthen the management, leadership and project formulation capacity of the NGO representatives attending the training. World Education trainers provided participants the opportunity to improve their theoretical and practical knowledge, and helped them understand some concepts, principles and methods of strategic planning and development.

By the completion of the training, the NGO representatives were able to understand a new method of leadership development; understand the concept of consensus in planning and development of a project; identify the needs of a community through assessment and analysis; use needs assessment tools more appropriately; design a project with clear and specific goals, purposes, outputs and inputs; write a proposal according to the designed project; and, plan a budget according to the designed project's inputs.

The NGO representatives realized that they must plan ahead in order to maintain their status, identity and direction as an organization. The competition they face in order to receive funds from outside sources is quite great. Since DFLEP was ending, World Education's staff wanted the best NGOs' staff they have worked with to have the tools to develop programs and obtain new projects in the near future.

A Learner Generated Materials (LGM) Training of Trainers (TOT) was facilitated in July 1997. The idea for this training was generated at the 1996 DFLEP final review meeting in Rupandehi District. A critical issue that arose for many of the NGO representatives in attendance was how to continue the reading practices among neo-literates in the future. At that meeting learner generated materials were discussed, as well as how the NGO representatives could be trained to lead their own LGM trainings to develop materials for and with neo-literates. In 1997, Bardiya's NGO representatives brought up the same issue. With the assistance of Lumbini Education Development Society (LEDS) in Butwal, a training was organized.

NGO/GO Relationship Building

The working relationship between the District Education Offices and the local NGOs that implemented the project increased over the three year period. At first the DEO staff was weary to work with the NGOs, but after the first year this began to change. In fact, as other line agencies in the district were made aware of the NGOs and the work they were doing, they often attended DFLEP's review meetings to share what they were doing in the districts and how they were involving local NGOs.

The government offices realized that the NGO workers knew the people living in their districts. Many of the NGOs had surveyed the VDCs they planned to work in and knew where to open literacy centers. This is not to say that some government workers don't trust the NGOs in the district, however, after providing the NGOs the opportunity to show what they could accomplish, most government line agencies' representatives are willing to talk with NGO representatives as well as work with them on projects. Even five years ago this may not have occurred.

Barriers to the Success of the Project

During the implementation phase of the project many challenges arose. The most challenging were the four government changes in three years. Because of those changes transfers in the District Education Offices resulted. World Education program officers worked with a total of 25 different District Education Officers in the nine districts where the project was implemented.

These changes made it difficult to build continuity within the districts while implementing the project. With each new officer a portion of time had to be spent on educating him regarding the relevance of non-formal education since most came from a background of strictly working in the formal education sector. On a positive note, those 25 officers have become aware of the importance of NFE/literacy training for adults and the results that can occur when NGOs are mobilized at the district and local level. Despite all the transfers, the government's program ran fairly smoothly in all of the project districts over three years. The challenge that World Education faced when dealing with a new District Education Officer was also experienced by the NGOs that received sub-grants from the DEO. During transition periods NGOs at times had difficulties receiving payments for work already completed. In some cases they also had to convince the District Education Officers that they could and did do quality work.

During the three years, the NFE coordinator's salary was provided by World Education. At times this caused confusion within the District Education Office, and some misunderstandings between World Education's program officer and the District Education Officer. The NFE coordinator worked out of the DEO, but also spent time at World Education's office in the district. There was confusion about who the NFE coordinator was working for at times because of where her/his salary was coming from, however, the NFE coordinator worked for the District Education Officer. Because of the high turnover rate of District Education Officers, there was a need to constantly be re-educating the new officers coming in regarding World Education's role in the collaboration with the DEO and NFE coordinator at the district level.

The evolution of the project from 1994 through 1997 brought changes that made the class cycles run more effectively at the district level by trying certain approaches and then evaluating them. For example, in 1994/95 a clustering approach was adopted in the districts. NGOs would service one area where there would be a cluster of classes. It was assumed that supervision and management of the classes would be more efficient and that certain areas would have a need for a specific number of classes that would form a cluster. Actually, this was found to be a hindrance to NGOs implementing the classes and at times duplication of participants occurred. In 1995/96 and 1996/97 this approach was discarded and NGOs were able to request classes in more than one VDC. It proved to be beneficial since the NGOs had certain VDCs that they were targeting, and this way they were able to meet their demands for literacy classes in more than one area.

Another area that could have been improved over the three year project was DFLEP's program orientation at the district and VDC-level. During the 1994/95 class cycle there was an orientation in the districts and VDCs wherever World Education and the NFEC were supporting classes. In 1995/96 and 1996/97 there was only an orientation at the district level and according to DFLEP program officers this affected the program in the VDCs. Often there were people in the VDCs who were not aware of the program, but if they had known about its existence would have been interested to become involved as a supporter of the program.

The lack of information to the villagers happened for several reasons. Planning and implementing the orientation took time and the NGO representatives, District Education Office staff involved in NFE and World Education's staff found it difficult to

incorporate this orientation into their activities. All involved realized the missed opportunity, but not until it was too late. Even in the third year staff said that the orientation should happen, but it wasn't a priority for those involved in the district. World Education program officers were busy collecting proposals, planning large facilitator and supervisor trainings in the districts sitting with the district's technical committee. That said, in the future, it would be beneficial for any organization implementing a literacy program like this to make the villagers at the local level aware of what is planned and why their VDC has been chosen to receive a program. This would also be the time to involve those villagers who have an interest in their community's development, but don't know all the activities supported by local, national or international NGOs and the Nepali government.

While implementing a program there will always be barriers that arise. If implementors of programs become aware of problems they will have the chance to solve them and improve their programs in the future. The challenge is actually recognizing the barriers and taking the time to change the approach in use in order to strengthen and build upon the existing program.

Conclusion

Now that the project has been completed and World Education will no longer be working with the NFEC or District Education Offices formally, NGOs were concerned about their futures in the district. The District Education Officers in the DFLEP districts would like to continue the program even without the presence of World Education. These officers have seen the results of the project over the last three years. This project has been successful.

Since August 1994 DFLEP's model has contributed to the national non-formal education program by implementing a policy to mobilize NGOs as literacy implementing partners through District Education Offices. Different class sizes were fixed according to different regions so that classes could be conducted more effectively. For example, in a mountain class there may be up to 20 participants, in the hills up to 25 participants and in the Terai up to 30 participants. The policy guidelines guarantee a fair procedure in choosing implementing partners. Most importantly, over 100,000 women have become literate because of the collaboration between the Ministry of Education's NFEC and World Education.

The District Female Literacy Expansion Project succeeded in building a foundation for running future literacy programs throughout Nepal. Through World Education's technical assistance to the local NGOs, GOs and DEOs, there are trained personnel in each of the nine project districts. The availability of people at all levels will ensure that future programs get off to a solid start. These organizations can run literacy programs on their own or in collaboration with each other.

Women participating in DFLEP-supported six month basic literacy classes.



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